GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
WATER RESOURCES
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:974
ANSWERED ON:20.08.2007
FRESH WATER
Gadakh Shri Tukaram Gangadhar

Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) the percentage of fresh water in natural resources;

(b) the total quality of fresh water available in the country;

(c) whether fresh water is suitable for agriculture irrigation purpose; and

(d) if so, the details in this regard?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI JAI PRAKASH NARAYAN YADAV)

(a)&(b) Fresh water of the World has been assessed under International Hydrological Programme (IHP) sponsored by UNESCO. As per the summary of the monograph `World Water Resources`, 97.5% of the world water resources are saline waters and only 2.5% is fresh water. The greater portion of this fresh water (68.9%) is in the form of ice and permanent snow cover in the Antarctic, the Arctic, and in the mountainous regions.Next, 29.9% exists as fresh groundwaters and 0.9% includes soil moisture, swamp water and permafrost. Only 0.3% of the total amount of fresh waters on the Earth are concentrated in lakes, reservoirs and river systems where they are most easily accessible for our economic needs and absolutely vital for water ecosystems.

For India, the average annual precipitation is estimated as 4000 Billion Cubic Metre (BCM). After accounting for the natural process of evaporation etc., the average annual water availability in the country is assessed as 1869 BCM.

(c)&(d) Fresh water is generally suitable for agricultural purposes. However, the quality of freshwater observed at different locations varies to certain extent and the same are duly accounted for at the time of crop and irrigation planning.